

Werner Erhard

A talk on enlightenment, transformation, and love

I've learned a little bit about acknowledging, and I know really that the acknowledgement says more about who you are than who I am, because it takes a certain kind of magnanimity and generosity to be able to acknowledge someone else.

And I wanted to come out here and tell you really how I felt about being with you, and you've already handled half the job by expressing your own magnificence and your own generosity in your acknowledgements. Thank you very much for that.

I appreciate you doing my job for me. And the other half of it is also kind of already handled, and I really love to talk to people who've got it all handled already. It makes it easier.

I like to play games. In fact, I prefer to play games that have already been won, and there's nothing much to do but play.

Since Jerry asked me to speak about love and about giving and receiving love and a couple of other things, and I see that you've got all that handled, we can just kind of be together for the next hour and a half and see what comes up.

One thing I do want to do, and I want to be real clear with you about this, is to tell you how much I appreciate what Jerry and Mimi have done and all the people that they just acknowledged. I want to let you know that it really inspires me and supports me in life and I think supports everybody in life when someone sticks their neck out. And Jerry and Mimi really stuck their neck out on this.

I have been told to watch the things I say, but I need to be clear, so I really love that Jerry and Mimi stuck their neck out and put their ass on the line, because what I think happens when people are willing to do that is that it reveals their soul and lets us see inside them and be with them in that way.

It's a real privilege to be able to be here at the event which they put together. It's a privilege and an honor to be able to be with you.

I'm always aware that when people give me their attention and their time that it's a gift. It's not possible to earn those things. It's only possible to receive them.

It's my very great pleasure to receive them from you and to have the honor and opportunity to be with you. I really love it.

I also wanted to point out one other thing.

I spent a long time examining various disciplines. I did it with a lot of vigor and with a lot of energy and a lot of commitment. I opened myself up as fully as I possibly could for quite a long time.

Looking for it, looking for the thing that was going to make a difference in my life, looking for the thing which was going to make a difference in my life period, that would make a difference in people's lives. And I went from discipline to discipline to discipline to discipline.

Some of them I had done to me. Some of them I learned to do to other people. Some of them I studied. Some of them I got involved in experientially.

And I related to them in whatever way I thought would most fully open me up to them and them up to me. It was a great training program.

And I can honestly say that in each of the disciplines that I had the opportunity to participate, I got something of value.

That's true without exception. And so I see that life is valuable and that each thing can be valuable if you're willing to make it that way, and that things are inherently valuable and it's just a matter of being willing to relate to them in that way.

And I'm sure you found the same thing.

I know that tonight, rather this whole day, this whole wonderful day with all of these really beautiful and wonderful people uh will be valuable to you. Uh You wouldn't be here, you're the kind of person who would get value out of it or you wouldn't be here in the first place. That's pretty obvious.

I know you'll get value out of it. I know it will be nurturing and important to you and that you'll go away with information you didn't have before, but I'd like to talk to you about something a little different than that.

What I'd like to talk to you about is making this the most important day in your life.

Now, in the normal course of events, we're not set up for such a thing.

I have to tell you a story, something that happened many years ago, about six or maybe seven years ago.

And uh what happened was that each weekend I did the training. I guess I was going to say for those of you who don't know what the training is, but that's a little stupid. Um each weekend I did the training.

During the week I would do whatever was necessary to keep the organization moving and expanding and getting more able to do its job.

Each night I would go do a seminar with graduates of the training. Sometimes I would give talks at various places. It was all really wonderful.

One afternoon I had a chance to walk down the street from where the office was. I walked into a shop that had oriental art in it. I was looking at the art. There was a photograph on the wall just as I walked out of a very weather-beaten Himalayan, Tibetan face. This man was sitting with his maroon robes on a kind of field with a mountain with snow in the background.

This was a face that had been out in the wind and the elements, the sun and the snow and the rain for a long, long, long time.

A very battered, experienced, been around for a long time face, but with the eyes of a child, of light, of aliveness shining out through this incredibly weather-beaten face.

I was really taken with the photograph. I knew the man whose shop I was in.

I said to Don that I'd like to have the photograph, but I'd really like to know who took the photograph. It was really a great photograph. I not only wanted the photograph, but I'd like to find a way to get the rights to use the photograph because I was so taken with it, I wanted to give it as a gift to other people.

Would he please try to find out who it was that took the photograph? He said he would try to find out, but he didn't think he could. He'd gotten it from somebody who'd gotten it from somebody who'd gotten it from somebody, and the source of it was lost.

So, fine, he said he would try.

I went to the training that weekend, and I was in the midst of doing the training, and this man stood up back over in there someplace.

We were in the Jack Tar Hotel, and for those of you who don't know about the Jack Tar Hotel, it's a hotel in San Francisco, and it's probably the most garish thing you've ever seen in your life.

It's kind of blue, and it's brick, and the bricks are painted blue. It's got the most incredible plastic fixtures, lighting fixtures that you've ever seen. Strange.

At any rate, this man stood up, and he said, you know, I have literally been around the world three times attempting to discover myself, or to get it, or to become enlightened.

He said, I've checked back into the Himalayas, where no Western people have ever been. Back into the Himalayas, where it's politically impossible to go, as a matter of fact, and where there are Tibetan monks and Tibetan lamas who've escaped from Tibet when the communist takeover happened, and these are people who simply don't interact with people from the West at all.

And I have been there, and I have been up in the mountains, and I have been in the desert, and I have been absolutely every place, and I want you to know that tonight I am really annoyed, because I have been in the most beautiful, most sacred places in the universe, and I'm sitting here under these damn plastic chandeliers in this strange hotel, and I have the feeling that I am going to get it here, and that annoys me.

So I told the man that it was interesting that he should talk about that, because I had just been in the shop, right, bought a photograph that I really loved, and obviously the rest of the story is plain.

He was the photographer who had taken that photograph, and he said, please have it as my gift, and I did give it to lots and lots and lots of people.

It's a very beautiful photograph, and the reason I tell you the story is because I've learned two really whole things from the thousands of people who have been kind enough to allow me to participate very deeply in their lives, and the things are really very important to me.

One of the two things that I have been taught by those thousands of people who've allowed me to participate deeply in their lives with them, profoundly, is that we really cannot afford the arrogance of living our lives as if there wasn't anything that we didn't know, the knowing of which would transform the quality of our lives.

Now that's a whole big mouthful, and I want to talk to you about it for a minute, and then I'll repeat it. So if you didn't quite follow it, I know it's fairly long, I will be repeating it.

I spent most of the beginning of my life learning.

In fact, I had an absolute rule that in any situation in which I had the option to learn or to earn, that I would always select the learning opportunity. In any situation where I had an opportunity, where there was a choice between securing my whatever, future reputation, etc., or learning, I would always opt for learning, and I would do that until I had completed the learning process, and my thought was that I might complete the learning process when I was 35.

Now, since I said that when I was about 17, you can forgive my arrogance that I thought that I might get the job done by the time I was 35, but at any rate, I did kind of think that way, and I really did learn.

My life was dedicated to learning, and I put myself in a lot of situations in which I could learn with a lot of people. I always had a teacher, always had a teacher, and I really surrendered to the teachers that I had.

I was as open as I could get myself to them, and in learning from them, and some of the teachers were people who were no longer alive, but who lived on in their teachings, either in books or with other people who taught the things which they'd discovered or were sharing, and so I had this rule that every day I had to learn something.

I could not have a day go by in which I did not learn some major new thing, and so I spent the first part of my life kind of piling up information, you know, until I got the pile very, very, very big.

I mean, I had a really big pile of knowledge, and uh if you knew me, I proved it to you quickly. I was a smart ass, and I was a damn good one.

I never noticed that the knowledge that I had wasn't nurturing to me. I noticed that it always let me be right, and that it always kept me in front and on top, and all of those other things which, at the time, seemed to be very important, but I never noticed that it didn't nurture me.

So I knew that I had a lot to learn.

So let's, you and I, be clear that when I make this statement to you that I've learned from the people who've allowed me to participate in their lives, that we cannot afford the arrogance of thinking that there's something that we don't know, the knowing of which would literally transform the quality of our lives.

I don't mean the ordinary kind of information. I know that you know that there's more of that.

I know that you know that your pile is incomplete, that you have to keep adding pieces to the pile, that it's not big enough, and as a matter of fact, our systems of education teach us that. They teach us that our pile is never big enough, that we need to keep learning more all the time, and that there is nothing which can be known which would be sufficient, that it is impossible to be sufficient.

I mean, you can't say my knowledge is sufficient. It's bad taste. It's not allowed socially. You can't say my knowledge is sufficient.

You have to say, no, I need to know more. I don't know enough. I need to know more.

So let's, you and I, be clear that I am not talking about that kind of information or that kind of knowledge. I'm talking about knowledge, the quality of which would take the whole pile and destroy it, which would take that whole pile of knowledge you've got, every piece of information, and the system which holds it together and makes it all meaningful, and suddenly dissipate it, you know, blast it apart and throw it to the wind.

Now, you and I don't live, for the most part, you and I don't live our lives as if such information actually existed.

We don't live our lives open to the possibility that there is information which would sweep away everything we know. We don't live our lives as if there's information which would be sufficient, which would be complete. At least for the most part, we don't live our lives that way.

I think that I'm safe in saying that we have a cultural and societal, that we have a cultural and societal conspiracy against that idea. So in order to live one's life that way, one has to kind of discipline oneself to live that way, since the conspiracy is contrary to that.

So the statement is that under any, no, sorry, that we cannot afford the arrogance to live our lives as if there isn't something that we could know, the knowing of which would transform all of our whole system of information, transform our lives.

I have found it very useful to walk around open to that kind of information all the time, to be always open to that kind of information.

Now the other part of it is that from time to time you do get that kind of information. From time to time, people do experience transforming their system of knowledge.

I have such an experience that people often ask me about the one which preceded the training as if it were significant. And the problem with that kind of information is that it isn't significant.

You know, significant means fits into some system of better or worse, of good and bad, of right and wrong, of yes and no, and the kind of information about which I'm talking doesn't fit into that kind of a system.

It isn't a piece of information. It's the context information itself. It's kind of not a piece of knowledge, but the capacity for knowledge.

So it's been useful for me to be open to that kind of information.

And that takes me to the other statement which I wanted to make to you and the other thing which I've learned, the other thing which I've learned from the thousands of people who have allowed me to participate in your lives that I wanted to share with you tonight, and that is that under any circumstances and at any time, you have the power to transform the quality of your life.

It doesn't mean that you need to be in the Himalayas. You don't need to be in a monastery. You don't need to be in church. It doesn't have to be Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's, any time, under any circumstances.

The circumstances don't even have to be special. At all times and under all circumstances, you and I possess the power to transform the quality of our lives.

Very rarely do we live as if that's so.

We're always looking to get to the right circumstances. See, I think that you and I have a pretty big commitment to finding those circumstances or that person or that teaching or that discipline which will allow us to transform the quality of our lives.

We've got a pretty big commitment to that.

But if you've been through that enough, you've been through enough trainings and enough seminars and enough disciplines and enough things, you pretty soon begin to get that there is some element which is necessary for all that to be really complete.

The element I'd like to suggest is for you to know that under any circumstances and in all circumstances and at any time, you have the power to transform the quality of your life.

You don't need someone in order to transform the quality of your life. You don't need a particular piece of information. You don't need a particular set of circumstances. You don't need a particular experience.

You don't have to wait till the angels blow in your ear. It can be done in the subway. More importantly, it can be done right here.

And there's a magic wand to doing it. It's called choice. You simply choose that your life is transformed.

Now, it's interesting. When I was a very small boy during the war to end all wars, the Second World War, the last war in which there were heroes, I remember there were things called victory gardens.

And out behind where we lived, there was this kind of vacant lot. And I had a victory garden there, which my mother helped me to plant.

I remember I planted the seeds and I waited for 10 whole days for something to happen. And nothing happened.

I went out there every day to look. It was all it was, was dirt. Nothing happened.

And I went out and I dug up the seeds that had been planted to see if they were growing. And sure enough, they were growing.

And I brought them in and showed them to my mother that these sprouted under the earth and were growing.

And of course, she pointed out to me that once I'd taken them out of the ground, they would stop growing and that they wouldn't grow anymore.

So the truth of the matter is that I was kind of unwilling to accept that it was working without some proof that it was working. And in the act of getting the proof, I destroyed the workability.

And transformation is exactly that way. You can be transformed if you're willing to be. And you can't be transformed if you aren't willing to be.

If you need proof, you can't have it. Because the very act of accumulating proof is counter transformation.

Do you know what it looks like to be transformed?

Looks like that. It's not angels blowing in your ears. You are what it looks like.

If you're willing to be transformed, if you're willing to be responsible for being transformed, if you're willing for your life to be complete and whole, and if you're willing for the circumstances

of your life, whatever they happen to be, to be evidence of your wholeness, to be evidence of your completion, you're willing for that to be, then it is.

Now, in the world of pro and con, in the world of controversy, in the world in which things are proven to be true or are untrue, in the world in which things are true because they can be false, in the world in which this exists only by virtue of the fact that it doesn't exist over here, in that world, whatever it is can be an expression of your transformation if you're willing to be transformed.

So at all times and under any circumstances, you have the power to transform the quality of your life by simply allowing it to be so.

And then by being willing to take whatever circumstances are in that context of transformation and holding those circumstances as an expression of your transformation, then there's only one kind of caveat about that.

That is, that you can't be transformed if you are.

So what you have to do with being transformed is to simply let go of it.

Because when you let go of it, then you have the capacity to be transformed.

So it's kind of like holding it very loosely, kind of like letting it go.

Suzuki Roshi spoke about the beginner's mind.

This is a man who's been a Zen master for 25 years, wrote the book just at the end of his life, talked about Zen mind, beginner's mind.

You know, I got it. Not I've had it all along. If you've had it all along, you ain't got it. If you've just got it, you got it.

So you can't have it, but you can get it now, and now, and now, and now, and now.

And for me, that's what today is about. Today is about the opportunity to take responsibility for that you are transformed.

So I had this incredible opportunity in life to talk to literally millions of people about this whole situation of enlightenment and transformation and getting it and what that means and what it doesn't mean and all the nonsense that goes with it.

And I have watched that people are willing to give up anything to get it. Anything.

People will give up anything.

I have watched literally people, I have watched people give up, literally give up their fortune to take all the money that they've accumulated, which provided financial security for them in the world, and to give it away in order to be enlightened.

I've watched people give up their families in which they felt very secure and safe. I've watched them move away from their families, from the safety of their families, from the safety of their own cultures.

I've watched people give up their health, literally be willing to give up their body, literally willing to give up their life to be transformed, to be enlightened.

People will give up anything except the one thing which you've got to sacrifice. That almost nobody is willing to give up.

People will spend hours and hours and hours and hours doing things they hate in order to be transformed. They'll do anything except the one thing which they need to do in order to be transformed.

It's amazing.

So I, you know, there's that old Zen story about the man who came to the Zen master and said, listen, I want to be enlightened and I'll do anything. I really want to be enlightened. I will do absolutely anything. And the Zen master said, good, come take a walk with me. And he put his arm around this fellow's shoulder and they walked and they walked up to the edge of the lake and they walked out into the lake.

And when they got up to about chest deep, the Zen master tightened his grip around the man's neck and put his head under the water and kept it under there until the man was almost dead.

At which point he pulled his head out of the water and said to him, when you want to be enlightened as badly as you just wanted to get a breath, come back.

And it really is that way.

And everybody thinks they want to be enlightened that badly, but they're never willing to make the ultimate sacrifice.

To make the ultimate sacrifice, you really got to want to be enlightened. And the ultimate sacrifice is the most difficult one to give.

I know it because I've seen it thousands, millions of times.

People will not give up that they are not enlightened. It's too horrible to give it up. They don't have enough motivation to give that up.

They have enough motivation to sit in a lotus position until their knees are very bad. They'll meditate forever until their beard goes down to their, the floor.

For the ultimate act, you mean you want me to be responsible for being enlightened?

See, you don't get to wear a badge. There's no badge. They don't give you a button when you join the club, you know.

As a matter of fact, if you need someone to tell you that you're enlightened, you're in deep trouble. You can't get enlightened.

Gee, that's terrible to tell people that, because they have so much fun doing things that are going to enlighten them.

Now, do you think that I said don't do things that enlighten people? No, I didn't say that at all. They're wonderful.

Do them. People love to do them. I love to do them.

I do do them. But I do them because I love to do them, because they're wonderful. Not because I think anybody's going to get enlightened.

You can't get enlightened. You can't earn enlightenment.

See, it's interesting because I know, look, I spent the first 35 years of my life finding out the rules about how to make it, just like you did.

And we all know all the rules about how to make it. We define making it in different ways. When I was growing up, it was defined as living in the right neighborhood, the right way, etc.

Today, making it is defined as not living in the right neighborhood, not having too much, etc. But everybody knows what the rules are about making it.

It used to be holier than thou, now it's hipper than thou, so forth.

So we all know how to make it. We know the rules of making it. Everybody knows the rules of making it.

And if you examine people who are failures, you see that they have applied the rules of making it to be failures, and that in their system, one has made it when one has failed.

It's hard to believe because most of us have bought into the success model, but there are a lot of people who bought into the failure model. And for them, making it is to fail.

They have made it when they have failed.

But of course, see, you can't just fail because that would be too easy. You have to have a system of justifications for it.

And that's what takes so long. If you just fail, you get it over with. But that's no good.

It has to be justified. So you need a whole system of justifications in which you've efforted and tried and put a lot out and done everything you need to do and were good and they were bad to you and you know all that stuff.

But that's the rules for making it.

That's the rules, as I like to say, life is about three feet long. I could have said two feet, but that would have been not quite the way I see life. I see life is about three feet.

And I thought that was appropriate since most people have two feet. All seem to fit somehow. I don't know.

So I see life is three feet long and the first two feet, three quarters of an inch are about making it, you know, in whatever terms that whatever terms are meaningful to you, making it spiritually, making it psychologically, making it materially, making it however you wanted to make it personally, humanly, worldly, whatever it is.

So the first two feet, three quarter, two feet, 11, three quarters of an inch are about making it.

And there are basically three rules to making it.

The first rule is more. Whatever it is, more is better.

Now there's a new kind of more. The new kind of more is less. All we need is more or less. That's the pendulum.

You know about the pendulum? It keeps swinging back and forth and back and forth. Sometimes people draw it like this.

It's the same thing. And so more or less, more or less is now better, but it's the same old game. Still more is better.

Now when more doesn't work, then what we need to do is to do it better. You know, when you've done it more, that isn't it. What you need is a better form of it.

That's to do it better, higher quality, better teacher, better discipline. Another discipline was okay, but this one's better.

And when better doesn't work, then the answer to that is different.

What I need is something different to help all these disciplines. No disciplines. Disciplines don't work.

No disciplines. That's different.

Now what people don't notice is that the thing they did more of was something different than the last thing they did better of.

And this thing that they're now doing differently will not work either, ultimately will not work, so they're going to have to do that more.

And when that doesn't work, they do it better. When that doesn't work, they do it different.

And when it doesn't work, they do more of what they did different. When that doesn't work, they do better of what they did more of. And when that doesn't work, they do different what they were doing better.

And that is the rules of making it in this world. That's all you need to know to make it in this world.

If you keep doing more better and different, you keep doing that, you will be successful in whatever terms you set up to be successful.

It will be incomplete. It will be unsatisfying. It will not nurture you ultimately, but no one will know that.

See, nobody will know that, because everybody agrees with that stuff. It's wonderful. But you will know that, and therefore you will be unsatisfied.

So the last quarter of an inch, that's the first two feet, 11 inches, two feet, 11 and three quarters inches, and the last quarter of an inch works in an entirely different set of rules.

The rules are entirely different in the last quarter of an inch, and if you attempt to take the rules from the first two feet, 11 and three quarters of an inch into the last quarter of an inch, it won't work.

And almost everybody does try to take the rules from the first two feet, 11 and three quarters of an inch.

That is to say, when you're attempting to be enlightened, you first try more. When that doesn't work, you try better. And when that doesn't work, you try different.

And the problem is that you can't get enlightened.

Now that's a nasty thing to say to people, particularly people in this room. But never mind, it's the truth.

You can't get enlightened. You cannot get enlightened. You can be enlightened, but you can't get enlightened.

And the corollary is nothing is going to enlighten you.

And I mean that both ways. I mean both that there isn't anything around or anybody around who's going to enlighten you, and what will enlighten you is nothing.

One is enlightened by being willing to be enlightened.

If you've got any system of measuring enlightenment, you cannot be enlightened. If you know, for instance, that enlightened people have their third eye open, you can't be enlightened.

Gee, I hope you listen to that. If you've got any system by which you measure enlightenment, you cannot be enlightened.

The measurement of enlightenment is what is.

And if you will notice, everything which is, is. Therefore, enlightenment is total. You have all passed the measure.

Everybody qualifies.

As long as what is, is, and what isn't, isn't, then you are enlightened. All you need to do at that point is to acknowledge it.

But that's the most difficult thing in the world to do, is to acknowledge it. Because when you acknowledge it, you can't prove it.

And what you really wanted was proof.

Now, didn't you? I mean, I thought I was going to get a badge. At least, you know, like this, I could do.

If I couldn't wear it outside, I could at least wear it, you know, over here and flash it to the right people.

In fact, I still privately and secretly think there ought to be a badge. But there ain't no badges.

There are no badges. If you need somebody to tell you that you're enlightened, you are not enlightened.

You put up the one barrier that you can possibly put up, and that is that you need proof.

Enlightenment, unlike everything in the first two feet, eleven and three quarters of an inch, is not about agreement.

And the other thing is that it doesn't mean anything to be enlightened. It's like the rest of the truth.

It doesn't mean anything.

See, people think that the truth is useful. It is not useful.

The truth just is. And the instant you try to make a rule out of it, it becomes a lie.

Enlightenment the same way.

You can only be enlightened, you can't be proving that you're enlightened.

See, the truth is a place to come from, not something to determine your actions. Not a rule which limits behavior.

The truth is a place to come from, not a rule which limits behavior.

Enlightenment is a place to come from, not something which determines how you act.

You waiting for somebody to give you robes?

Terrible. Terrible. You got sucked into that con game.

It was a little test that the Hindus invented.

Let's see, who haven't I insulted yet?

I'll be with you in just a second.

Thank you. Yeah, okay, hold on for just a second. Let me finish this one last thing and then we'll do questions and comments and all that stuff.

Actually, I didn't mean to even talk when I came in. I was going to start right in, but I don't know. I got into it.

Listen, I really love that.....the one thing which I really do want to share with people is that they have the power to transform the quality of their lives and that they've got that power all the time and under any circumstances.

You see, you cannot change the circumstances of your life, and I know it looks like you can, and I know that it's very foolish to tell people in a public forum that they can't change the circumstances of their lives, because our whole society and culture and education and systems of religion, etc., are dedicated to the idea that you can control the circumstances in your life.

That's an illusion, and the more you buy into the illusion, the more you get involved with the illusion, the further away from the truth you get.

Now, some people say, well, I will deny the illusion. That is as attached to the illusion as you can get.

The most attached to the illusion that you can get is to deny it.

The secret is to master it and internally to at least allow it to be, to acknowledge its existence, to become familiar with it.

Illusions are easy, they're finite, they're limited, they're handleable, but transformation is unlimited.

It exists in a realm unlike the illusion. The illusion is hard and solid and provable. The truth, transformation, enlightenment, is contextual.

It is not a chair, it is chair-ness.

So if you understand chair-ness, you can make a chair out of a blackboard. If you understand airplane, and you're the Wright brothers, you're in big trouble.

You've got to understand airplane-ness. You've got to be able to see flight in that which does not yet fly.

You've got to have the context flight, not the form flight, not the illusion of flight, not the expression of flight, but that from, that whence flight derives.

And so transformation is like that. It's a context in which you hold the circumstances of your life, and you have absolute power over the context. Absolute power.

You can choose any context you like, it's available to you at all times and under any circumstances, and it's yours for the taking, and what I mean by taking is willing to be responsible for, willing to come from.

Are you willing to take the set of circumstances you've got and come from being enlightened? Then you're enlightened.

Are you willing to hold the circumstances of your life in the context of enlightenment? Then you're enlightened.

For me, that's what today is about.

That's what this morning was about. What this afternoon was about. It's what tonight's about, and what tomorrow's about, and what all of it's about.

It's an opportunity to be enlightened, to wave your magic wand, if you will, and choose to be enlightened, to come from enlightenment, not to prove that you're enlightened, but to simply come from it.

Oh goodness, how am I supposed to talk about love? Love, as we go along....

At any rate, just to kind of summarize this, I really want to thank Mimi and Jerry, and all the people who participated with them, and everybody in the auditorium, and all of the wonderful people who spoke, and those who are to speak and perform yet tonight.

I want to thank all of you for sticking your neck out, and putting your ass on the line, and opening your soul up.

It really is an incredible opportunity to participate with you in that.

Thank you.

Somebody had something that they wanted to ask or say. If you put your hand up there, people with microphones, I guess you all know about that.

Yes, there's somebody up there. They're up there, whoever's doing that. That sounds like it went on.

Jack: Hello?

Werner: Yes, hi.

Jack: Hi, I'm Jack. How are you?

Werner: Hi, Jack. Nice to meet you. Thank you.

Jack: My pleasure. Really.

PartWhat I would like to ask you is, I don't know if it's possible to put this in the newspaper, in the news, or the Times, or something like that, but what I would like to do is I would like to ask your permission if I could put an ad in the paper saying that the end of starvation is an idea whose time has come.

Werner: Yes, you really don't, obviously, and I know you're not asking for my permission, you're kind of discussing with me, and obviously you don't need my permission, and in that context of having a little bit of a discussion between you and me, there are people who really looked at that and have taken a lot of responsibility for that whole issue of really communicating to people that the end of hunger and starvation on the planet is an idea whose time has come.

If there's some contribution you want to make to that, including putting an ad in the newspaper or participating in doing so, I'd like to recommend that you get in touch with the local Hunger

Project office here. They've taken a look at it, they'd be willing to cooperate with you and to coordinate that particular effort with all of the other efforts.

At any rate, Jack, I think it's a great idea, and you certainly have my support in it.

Jack: Thank you very much. Thank you.

Werner: Yes.

Give them just a second so they can do all that dialing they have to do. Okay.

Participant: Hello.

Werner: Hi.

Participant: Hi Werner

I'd like to ask you about something you mentioned about the gradualness of the process of transformation.

Werner: Yes.

Participant: You know, you just can't pick up the seed when it's still in the ground. And since it is a gradual process, and there are lots of people in the world who we look to for leadership, and you are leaders of this sort, although you seem to want to make a distinction between what you're doing and what the other leaders are doing.

Or make a distinction between being a leader or not. Are you saying that you're not a leader?

Werner: No, you were saying that.

Participant: No, I was saying...

Werner: What is your question?

Participant: OK. The question is, when leaders appeal to verifiable criteria, the example I have in mind is the TM program, where the evidence of enlightenment is seen to grow gradually and tested by means of things like changes in body chemistry, increases in physical health, brain waves, and so on.

Would you consider this to be valuable in establishing that the people who are leading this movement are, in fact, dealing with something that's real because it is, in fact, verifiable?

Werner: Yeah.

You ready for me to...

Participant: Yeah. Okay.

Werner: First off, enlightenment is not a process.

I repeat, enlightenment is not a process. Enlightenment happens outside of time, therefore it cannot be a process. Process is that which happens in time.

As a matter of fact, may be what time is. Time may be nothing more than the process of change.

Enlightenment happens outside of time.

It allows a process rather than is a process.

Now, some people say to me, well, look, now we know that it takes 20 years in Zen monastery to become enlightened. How can it happen in two weekends in the training that you put together?

And, you know, if you're asking such a question, the answer isn't even worth dealing with, first off.

But since you didn't ask it and since I pose it rhetorically, the point is that what happens in Zen monastery is 20 years of not being enlightened. Enlightenment happens like that.

What takes so long is not being enlightened and more not being enlightened and more not being enlightened and more not being enlightened.

And it doesn't take two weekends in the training.

You know, it happens like that.

Or it doesn't happen, that is to say it happens outside of time. So the training is 60 hours of not being enlightened and no time of enlightenment, just like all practices.

Now, as far as demonstrating, listen, I'm trying to see how to get at this.

I came back from India where I made a trip in, I think, November or December of last year. In fact, I think it was November or December of last year, to examine for myself out in the field firsthand what was happening in India in terms of hunger and malnutrition and what was happening in India in terms of poverty and opportunity and what was happening in India in terms of self-sufficiency and how the government was relating to that and so on and so forth.

Okay.

What I found was a lot, it was very helpful, very helpful. I found the government that had a fairly clear commitment to rural villages, to the development of India through rural villages, of which there are something like 500,000, a commitment to the people of India across the nation rather than in various particular pockets. Lots of very helpful things.

A food surplus for the first time, since which surplus there's been another and even better surplus, a balance of payment surplus, a lot of good management and a lot of very positive things.

By the same token, I also saw absolutely that no technology of development and no amount of resources was going to turn India around so that her people would be self-sufficient in feeding themselves.

And that gets very clear, because you can go into villages where thousands and thousands of dollars have been poured into the village, where technicians and technology have been brought in in abundance, in fact, in overabundance, and it simply hasn't worked.

By the same token, go to other villages where resources have been brought in, not too many but an appropriate amount, where technology has been brought in, not too much but an appropriate technology, and the thing which makes it work, the catalyst, is an individual and social transformation of people in the village.

So that it's very clear to me that the secret of development in developing countries, and in particular in rural villages and urban ghettos, the secret of development is threefold. One is technology.

Two are resources. And the third, and equally important, is the transformation of people on an individual and social basis.

I have not seen it happen without all three.

Now, India is kind of, I mean, if we're going to locate the home of individual and social transformation, we would have to say it really all started in India, and then certainly got nurtured throughout Asia.

And so they don't have all of that, right? And they do have all of it.

And it's related in a little bit of a particular way.

So the Indians are aware of what I just told you, including the Indians in the villages. If you walk out where there aren't any roads, you walk down into the little pathways between the rice fields, you walk out to the furthest end, where it doesn't go any further, you talk to the farm laborers and the small plot owners out there, and walk over to the village where the wives and children and older people are, and you talk to them, they are not unaware of that.

They know that it takes something besides money and new seeds and implements and those kinds of things in order to affect the transformation which they are looking for.

Now, what they want, however, because perhaps what they've been taught to want is another Gandhi. They're waiting for another Gandhi.

Now, let's you and I be clear that without Gandhi, India probably would not enjoy the kinds of freedom and opportunity that they have today.

So this in no way means to imply any disrespect or any admiration for Gandhi. I think that Gandhi was the most perfect man for India during the time when he was in fact demonstrably the most important man for India.

Another Gandhi would probably ruin India, because the secret is not another Gandhi, but for each Indian to find the Gandhi within him or herself.

Participant: When that begins to happen, you seem to be saying that there is visible change as people don't starve anymore and so on. Is that right?

Werner: Yeah, what I'm saying, I get what you're saying.

Participant: My question is, if there's visible change, if the process is a gradual one, shouldn't we be able to monitor it?

Werner: But you have to watch about that, because I know people who have transformed the quality of their lives and died of cancer.

You know, that a person has cancer does not invalidate their self. That a person's circumstances are poverty does not invalidate that self.

And it's the nonsense that says you are nothing because your circumstances don't say that you are something, which keeps people from understanding that they're whole and complete.

Out of which I then acknowledge to you totally, out of which experience of being whole and complete, their circumstances will begin to reflect that.

But we have to watch, you and I, we've got to watch that we don't sell people on that idea in such a way that they use their circumstances to invalidate themselves.

Yes, I really love the leadership provided by people who are providing leadership.

And the way I know it's legitimate is exactly the way you do. I look to see what the results in people's lives are.

And if I see that someone who's leading people, if I see in their lives positive expression of that leadership, I support that leadership.

And what I'm interested in providing, my part of the whatever space is not leadership. That isn't what I'm interested in providing.

It doesn't mean I couldn't provide it. It doesn't mean that I could. It doesn't mean that people don't ask me to provide it. It means that's not what I'm interested in.

I am interested that you shall find yourself as the leader of your own life. And as a function of that, that you shall be whatever people who know that they're worthwhile, that they're complete, that they're enlightened.

Whatever that is, whatever way that expresses itself, that you will express that into the world.

Now, if you and I are going to have a nice long discussion, we will come to the point where we say, sure, obviously what will happen is that that will make a world that works. That out of your enlightenment, you will make a world that works.

But I want to tell you something.

I have a very, very close friend, a man who has had a big part in my training, who died of cancer.

And he made, of his death, a contribution. In other words, he took those circumstances which are perhaps the ones most disliked in our culture.

And out of those circumstances, he made a contribution.

So, I don't think you and I are saying something different. It's just that I want to couch it, I want to hold it in a way which validates people, not in a way which gives people a comparison.

See, for me, the truth does not exist in the realm of comparison.

And that doesn't mean I don't want to take responsibility for the realm of comparison. I do.

Participant: You mean there aren't people who don't know what they're talking about?

Werner: There are people who don't know what they're talking about. I hope so.

Participant: I said, do you mean that there aren't people who don't know what they're talking about?

Werner: Yes. No, I do not mean that.

Participant: We all know what we're talking about.

Werner: No.

Participant: Could you clarify what you're trying to say, please?

Werner: Uh, no. Thank you.

But I will tell you where to get the clarity.

Not here. There.

Great.

I want to do one last thing, and that is I want to thank you for the way you handled all that. It was great. Thank you.

Let's see, there's a microphone. Oh, yes. Hi.

Participant:...holding their hand, hugging them, looking into their eyes. Even the one fellow that got up there and talked about that, it was like kind of passed by. It makes me wonder, why aren't we actually doing that?

A little bit of that, just to say, here we are physically, to get the body and the mind together like everybody's been saying we should do.

Werner: Gets people real interested in doing it when you don't do it for a while, doesn't it? It may have some value after all.

Participant:...But doesn't it become a tease after a while? Like, say, talking about sex for three days and nights, you after a while want to do it. I'm not saying we should have an orgy, but I'm saying there should be some release for the physical expressions that we have.

You know, even if it's like a group hug or a group, uh, something, you know? I mean, it's just my impersonation.

Werner: Yeah, okay, let's talk about that a little bit, okay?

Participant:...Sure.

Werner: This thing about love or affection or what goes on between us is pretty basic to everybody's life.

And as you say, it seems to exist in a lot of ways. One of the ways it exists is conceptually.

It exists as an idea or a system of ideas or thoughts. And, uh, I guess as you said, it has its place.

It's useful to be able to think about love well.

Or to be able to think about love in a way that's satisfying or clarifying or, uh, in a way that enhances your ability to do it. But it's different than doing it.

And the one place where I wanted to talk to what you said a little bit is that people fail to make a certain distinction in there.

That a certain discrimination seems to be necessary. And out of what you said, I think you give me an opportunity to perhaps point out the distinction, the discrimination which is necessary.

Uh, people don't make a discrimination between the idea of love, let's say. Let's talk about love. They don't make a distinction. They don't discriminate between the idea of love, the thought of love, and the pictures or images that they've got about love.

That is to say, they don't make the right distinction. They think that the idea of love is different than the picture or image or feelings or sensations of love.

When I say picture or image, I don't mean one composed merely of what we ordinarily associate with our vision.

I also mean a feeling picture. You know, a tactile sense picture. And a smell, taste picture.

So that when I say that the idea of love, and the thoughts about love, and the conversation about love, that we have to watch what kind of distinction we make when comparing that with our pictures, that is to say, a full-blown sensation, feeling, smell, emotion.

See, that for me belongs in the same conceptual realm.

I'm not hugging you, therefore I'm not loving you. Maybe that's the same realm.

See, I find it possible to make love by conversation. I find it possible for you and I to be standing 30 or 40 feet apart, for us not to, quote, know each other, end of quote, very well, to be interacting on a question in which perhaps we have slightly different views, and to have this be an expression of love.

To both experience that we love each other, to be expressing our love for each other, and to be coming from a context of love for each other.

So, I'd like to caution that you hold the pictures you've got about what it means to express your love, you hold the memories you've got, you hold the cultural agreements about what it means, and the personal agreements about what it means, and the two-of-you agreement about what it means, more in the space of the concepts about love, and less in the experience of love.

You actually got me to talk about what I was supposed to talk about, so I'll keep on (*inaudible*) for a second here.

Let's use the chair to represent the whole system of concepts about love. This includes what everybody knows about love. This includes all the words that have been written about it, everything you and I have said about it, all the ideas, all the thoughts, all the belief systems, all of that.

And that's pretty clear, I think, to most people in the room, that there's a distinction between, and let's fold this music stand, the experience of love and the concept of love.

So, we've got the experience of love and the concept of love.

One of the big mistakes, however, that most of us make is that we think that our pictures about love and our memories about love belong here, and they don't.

The pictures and memories about love belong here. They're conceptual. They're illusionary.

They don't kind of exist, not really, not substantially, like this little tough stuff here.

Now, there is, first of all, about 99% of what you and I know about love, 99% of anything we've got to do with love is located right here.

This is 99% of the love game.

The other 1% is over here, but about 1% of it's over here.

So that all of the things that I can think about, and all of the things that I can talk about, and all of the things that I can imagine about love belong here.

And that's kind of shocking and startling for most people, because that's all they've got.

Literally, that's all they've got.

By the same token, I'm clear that there isn't anybody in this room who has not at some time in their life experienced absolute love.

There isn't anybody in the room who has not experienced the experience of love.

And if you'll notice back to it, if you'll become aware of it, if you'll notice that it really is kind of distinct from your pictures about what love is.

I remember in Maslow's big book, he talks about, I think it was in the book, someplace in his writing, Personality and Motivation, he talks about a woman who, while cooking breakfast for her family, turned around and was absolutely moved by her love of them.

Now, they weren't doing anything loving or, quote, loving, unquote.

She was cooking breakfast, frying bacon, as I recall. They were sitting at the table waiting for breakfast.

This was not looking into each other's eyes. This was not embracing each other. This was not whispering into each other's ear or patting each other on the ass.

This was kind of common, ordinary, everyday stuff.

And the woman experienced her love for her family.

Now, her memory of that experience belongs over here. The experience itself belongs here.

And I daresay everyone in the room has had an experience of love.

The problem is that, like all experience, it degenerates into a concept about the experience. It degenerates into a picture of it, into a memory of it, into the symbols of it, into something which represents the real thing but is not the real thing.

Now, unfortunately, many of us have forgotten that the real thing even exists. And we've only got the concepts.

And we divide the concepts into two different kinds of concepts.

The kind that are thoughtful and the kind that are pictorial.

Remember, when I say picture, I don't mean draw a picture. Or even three-dimensional picture, I mean multi-dimensional.

It has a smell in it and taste in it and hearing in it and tactile sensation, hot and cold and pressure and pain and pleasure, etc.

It still belongs here.

So that this represents this.

Now, the problem is that, given the way you and I are wired up, this begins to dominate that.

I must not love you because I'm standing up here and you're sitting down there. And my system of concepts say, if we love each other, I've got to be embracing you.

So I must not love you.

Now my experience is being determined by my concepts.

I couldn't love him because all the people I love look like that.

He doesn't look like that, therefore I don't love him, obviously.

I think he's something. I mean, I know what I think of him because my system of concepts tells me what I think of him.

And so experience begins to be dominated by concept.

Most dominated by our pictures of what things are and are not. By our notions.

The conceptually derived experience reinforces the concept, doesn't it?

I know I don't like him. So when I interact with him, I'll interact with him like I don't like him.

That'll prove that I was right in not liking him.

Reinforcing my concepts more totally determining how I interact, how I experience the next person.

Him, her I love.

She looks just like it, she fits all my pictures. So I know I love her.

I mean, I can tell from way back there that I love her.

Because my concepts let me know.

So that I know when I go there, this conceptually derived experience of her will prove that I love her.

And it'll feel good.

It'll feel like my concepts tell me things that feel good are like.

So I'll want some more of that.

Which will reinforce the concepts and eventually she and I will strike up a relationship.

And it won't work.

And I don't know why it doesn't work.

Will it work?

Listen, if you've got any honesty at all, you know damn right well it won't work.

Because you have never seen a relationship that works.

Notice how quiet it got when I said that?

Because I just said, your relationship doesn't work.

Participant: *(shouts something out that is inaudible)*

Werner: Relax. Keep your shirt on.

Why did I say your relationships don't work? I'm pretty safe. I'm real safe as a matter of fact.

Remember I've talked to millions of people now.

Honest, I may not know your name, I may never have seen your face before. But I know as much about you as your mother does.

And I know for sure your relationships don't work.

See because I know what your concepts about a workable relationship are.

And if you've got any concepts about what a workable relationship is, your relationships don't work.

I mean look, you know that she's not supposed to fill in the blank.

And whatever it is that she's not supposed to, she will.

Have you ever noticed?

They always do.

And if you only had one she's not supposed to, by accident she might miss.

But you've got enough she's not supposed to's so that she can't miss.

And if she does, your concepts say my relationship doesn't work.

Okay.

Pretty soon we don't have any experiences, not really.

So all we've got are conceptually derived behaviors. Conceptually derived processes.

None of which are nurturing or satisfying.

But if they look like your concepts say they ought to look, they look like your pictures say that they ought to look, that makes you a successful lover.

And that feels good.

It's gratifying.

I didn't say it was satisfying, I said it was gratifying.

So a lot of that.

You want to be gratified, get it to look like your pictures look.

Now that's real simple.

That is not a complex piece of information.

You want gratification.

Get the circumstances to look like your pictures say they ought to look.

And it will be gratifying.

It will never be satisfying.

But it will be gratifying.

I told you that this is 99% of our love life.

This is 1% of our love life.

There's something else.

I'll use the podium to represent something else.

Now, I've already used up 100%.

So what we've got left is nothing.

And that's really what I want to talk to you about, the nothing of love.

I am not talking to you about the experience of love.

Would you please get that.

Nor am I denying that the experience of love exists.

I am, however, saying most of what you and I call love isn't experience, it is in fact pictures and concepts.

Even when it feels good, it ain't necessarily the experience of love.

It's very gratifying to have it look like your concepts.

That's 99%, that's 1%, this is 0%.

What this is, is the context of love.

It doesn't exist anyplace.

It doesn't look like anything.

It has no form, it has no shape, it has no time, it has no beginning, it has no middle, it has no end.

It doesn't oscillate, it has no energy.

It's nothing.

It's, love is.

And there's nothing you can do about it.

And you have absolute dominion over it.

It is by virtue of your willingness to be responsible for it and to come from it.

When I interact, I come from love.

When I want to know what love looks like, I look at the way I'm interacting when I come from love.

When I want to know what love looks like, I look at what is.

This is what love looks like now.

This is not what love looks like in a moment.

And if I hold on to this as the picture of love, it will deny me any possibility of love in truth.

All I'll be able to have is love in concept.

And in the way down, I may even experience a little love.

I want to give you a quote.

I have five quotes. That's the total number of quotes I have in the world.

And I always try to have a quote when I talk because it lends a little class.

I have five of them, which is about as much class as I can tolerate.

This is a quote from a book by Bubba Free John.

And it's on the back of the book, which is very fortunate.

All good authors have the good sense to put the point on the back of their books.

“There have been many people who came to me and very quickly became involved in the experiential dimensions stimulated by the yogic aspect of divine power. They had all kinds of experiences, but it didn't change them one iota. They were just as stupid, just as committed to their asshole destiny in the midst of craze, bliss, and visions as they were before they ever heard of Kundalini. They failed to understand justice completely. And they were very quick to leave as soon as some fascination in their personal life or somewhere else in the world presented itself. My teaching work over the last two and a half years has thus been associated with inner and outer miracles. But it was all a way to demonstrate how the fulfillment of the experiential life in individuals does not amount in any sense whatsoever to illumination. The arising of miraculous or extraordinary experiential phenomena does not produce the enlightened man, the wise man. Enlightened or radical understanding depends entirely on the conscious process, not the experiential one.”

There is the space of love, which is where the mastery of love is.

When you can create the space of love, when you can create around the circumstances you've got, including 30 feet between you and somebody else you've never met before, over a point about which there may be some disagreement, if you can create a space of love for that process, for that encounter, then you've got love mastery.

Then love is all there is.

And everything is an expression of love.

Now, no question about the fact that when you're stuck here, it's very useful to work your way through here in order to be able to master here.

So that all of the work that people do in opening themselves up, in becoming more sensitive, in becoming more open, in becoming more in touch with their bodies, in becoming more in touch with their interactions with others, the more interaction you can tolerate and create and play and put together, absolutely an enormous contribution.

But finally the responsibility is yours.

And this responsibility is not conceptual.

It isn't the idea of love.

That's down here.

This is the space of love and it doesn't exist.

From it, existence is possible.

It doesn't exist and from it, existence is possible.

It is contextual.

The experience is process and the concept is content.

What does it look like to have mastered love?

It looks like this.

These are the circumstances of the mastery of love.

Right now, right here, this.

It's never going to be better than this.

This is as good as it gets.

Do you remember you hoped you would find the right one?

And then it would all work out?

You will not find the right one until it works out.

Then I promise you, you'll have a problem of too many right ones.

Or everybody will be right.

And then it comes back to interacting with the circumstances appropriately.

Wonderful.

Comes right around in a circle.

You know the story of the ten ox-herding pictures?

You know that there used to be eight ox-herding pictures?

They used to end with the empty circle.

Then Zen got enlightened and they put on the last two.

The last one looks like the first one.

Only it's different.

Or actually it's the same.

Which is unusual.

You know, when it's exactly the way it is, it's unusual, isn't it?

Everybody's looking for the light at the end of the tunnel.

You find the light at the end of the tunnel, you never get into the light.

It's light where you are.

You know, this truly is it.

No shit.

This is the way it worked out.

Honest, this is the way it worked out.

Remember, you were worried about how it was going to work out?

This is how it worked out.

Where is that man? Would you give him the microphone and then this gentleman.

But before we do that, let's finish up at that middle aisle here.

Justin: Thank you. My name is Justin.

And I appreciate the pure response to what hopefully is a question stemming from Essence.

I know...

Werner: Couldn't be otherwise.

Justin: right

Werner: Your question has to be from Essence.

Justin: right

Werner: That's all there is.

Justin: right

Werner: Fire away.

Justin: I know you know that there is a place beyond symbols, beyond polarities, beyond projection. I believe in label liberation.

Werner: I didn't get that last thing. Hold the mic just a little further away from your mouth.

Justin: Label liberation.

Werner: Label liberation. Okay, good.

Justin: That will process energy change.

What do you feel can be done?

This is the first time I've met you and I've heard many things.

I experience you very purely.

I don't put you up, I don't put you down, and I feel your purity.

My concern is for people who I know who have been through Essence and who at this present time still symbolize you.

Put you up, put themselves down.

They talk about getting it and it's obvious to me that they're still in the process of discovery process.

What can you do?

What can you do to really cut through the symbols and become real so that everyone in this room knows that they are your precise equal in Essence?

Because I believe that at that point, here and now, we can all move beyond symbols and be, and be.

Werner: That's very good.

So that you know, I don't experience being people's equals.

That isn't the way in which I relate to people.

My experience is not that we are equal, but that we are one.

Justin: In Essence.

Werner: No, not in Essence. In truth.

Justin: In truth

Werner: In fact. In reality.

Not in illusion, but in truth and in fact.

And what I mean by that is this.

I don't mean some nice thought.

I mean something very kind of palpable to me.

That is that when I'm in touch with who I am, and you're in touch with who you are, we're in touch with one.

In addition to which, the transformation, enlightenment, expresses itself as a shift in one's notion about oneself.

So that one's notion, one's experience, one's sense of oneself shifts from the sense that I am this thing here, and I am not that thing there.

Because if I woke up tomorrow and looked like that, I wouldn't know who the hell I was.

If I woke up tomorrow and looked like that in his house, I would be really confused about who I was.

Justin: Those are just concepts though.

In Essence, we are one.

Werner: Okay?

Anything else?

Justin: No.

Werner: Okay, anything beyond that?

I want to take a couple of minutes to, oh yeah, I apologize. Thank you.

Yes, please.

Participant: Thank you, but if you want to say something first, I'll do that.

Werner: No, no, you go ahead.

You've been kind enough and generous enough. Go ahead.

Participant: Well, thank you.

I'm sort of blown away.

Werner: You're which?

Participant: Sort of blown away.

Werner: That's nice too.

(Audio ends here)